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ST. NICHOLAS

We commemorate St. Nicholas on)ecember 6/19. About all most of us emember about him is that he was the rototype of Santa Claus. He certainly s a very popular saint – a patron of ountries, dioceses, cities, churches and f many people. Sailors, merchants, awnbrokers and children all claim im. There is much love for him.

He was born in the fourth century and ecame the bishop of Myra, which is in outhwestern Asia Minor, which we vould now identify as being in the area f Turkey. He was present at the First Ecumenical Council, which was held in Nicaea in 325. He was so incensed at Arius (who held that Christ is a created eing, inferior to God the Father in ature and dignity, though He was the irst and noblest of all created beings He lso taught that the Holy Spirit is not God, but created by the power of the Son) that he slapped him. This created a scandal and the 318 bishops present xpelled him and relieved him of his ishop status. However, upon closer xamination, he was immediately reintated and was then treated with the reat respect due him.

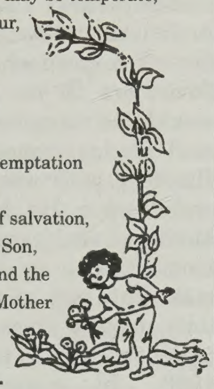
However, he is best remembered as a enevolent person. We can recall the tory of how he provided dowries for the laughters of a poor man.

Many parishes now hold programs on St. Nicholas Day rather than yolkas at Christmastime. They follow much the ame order with presentations by the hildren, Christmas music and St. Nicholas appearing with his bag of toys. But some parishes are modifying this. St. Nicholas is presented as a bishop nstead of the jolly Santa. Children ring him wrapped gifts intended for he less fortunate and then tell St. Nicholas how they have tried to be charitable and helpful during the year. St. Nicholas speaks a few words about their fforts and then gives them a small bag

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Saint Ignatius' Prayer for Children

O God, our heavenly Father, who lovest mankind
and are most merciful and compassionate,
have mercy upon Thy servants (children's names)
for whom I humbly pray to Thee,
and commend to Thy gracious care and protection.
Be Thou, O God, their guide and guardian
in all their endeavors,
lead them in the path of Thy Truth,
and draw them nearer to Thee
that they may lead a godly and righteous life
in Thy love and fear,
doing Thy will in all things.
Give them grace that they may be temperate,
industrious, diligent, devour,
and charitable.
Defend them against
the assaults of the enemy
and grant them wisdom
and strength to resist all temptation
and corruption of this life;
and direct them the way of salvation,
through the merits of Thy Son,
our Savior Jesus Christ, and the
intercessions of His Holy Mother
and Thy blessed saints.
Amen.



DON'T ATTEND

The Vigil Service on Christmas Eve rates only second to the Holy Thursday Service with the one many put on their "don't go" list. In too many parishes the church is empty. In a futile attempt to remedy this parish, councils and priests have moved the service from midnight to before the Holy Supper, to after the Holy Supper, to after or before a parish Holy Supper. Nothing seems to remedy the problem.

What a pity! The Vigil Service for the Nativity is one of the most beautiful services in the Orthodox Church. In many places it has been modified to fit into the average Americans "one hour attention span." Still people stay away.

The Vigil meaning to wait or watch during hours usually given over to sleep or rest is the old definition given in Webster's 1828 Dictionary. And this is what it is in the Orthodox Church. It is

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ST. JOHN DAMASCENE DECEMBER 4/17

There are so many St. Johns on the Church Calendar that they are identified by the area where they lived.

St. John was born in Damascus on March 27 around the year 645 to a well-to-do family. His father was an important Christian official at the court of khalif Abdul Malek. John and his brother were tutored by a Greek monk from Calabria, who had been taken prisoner by the Moslems.

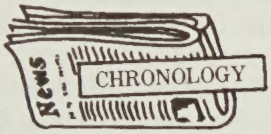
When his father, Sergius, died, John was appointed to succeed him in the Moslem court. When Emperor Leo III ordered the destruction of sacred images, John was able to write and publish a defense of their use as he had the protection of the Moslem Arab ruler. This paper In Defense of the Holy Images later played an important part at the Second Council of Nicea (787AD), which met to settle the dispute.

For his writings, especially in defense of icons, St. John was slandered by the Emperor Leo to the khalif. He ordered that since John wrote with his right hand, it offended and should be cut off. John prayed before the icon of the Mother of God and his hand was miraculously rejoined to his arm and he was healed. While he had prayed before the icon, John had promised that he would write hymns for Orthodoxy if he were healed. Although the khalif apologized and repented – John left his employment and left for a monastery. He fulfilled his vow. The incident with his severed hand is depicted in the icon which is known as The Theotokos of the Three Hands.

John was a Renaissance man before there was even a Renaissance. He was a priest, monk, poet, compiler, musician, theologian and mainly wrote hymns. He wrote much of the funeral service for the Parting of the Soul from the Body, compiled the Octoechos, which contains

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DECEMBER 2002

This issue is being mailed on or around November 22.

NATIVITY CARDS, to benefit orphans at Detski Dom in Sosnovla, Russia, are being sold by Troika Cards, PO Box 20001, York, PA 17402. Available with either English or Russian text, these cards, in full color, depict the Nativity ikon, courtesy of SS Peter and Paul church in Lorain, OH. They cost $6 for six small cards or $9 for five large cards. Send no money, invoice with postage and sales tax (if applicable) will be added. Wholesale prices available. For more info rogandel@yahoo.com

ORDER FOR CHRISTMAS: Video of concerts of Don Cossack Singers and Dancers. Send $18 for ppd copy to Harry Nalesnik, PO Box 1285, Montclair, NJ 07042. This is a 140 minute tape.

AN EXHIBIT of "Holy Icons of Mother Russia - Sacred Art from 1650-1917" is now on display at the Knights of Columbus Museum at 1 State St. in New Haven, CT 06511-6702, phone 203/865-0400 until January 23, 2003. There are 84 icons on display. Running from Dec. 6 to Jan. 15 is the 2nd annual Christmas Tree Festival. The theme this year is "A Russian Christmas." Admission and parking are free.

IN TIME FOR THE NATIVITY season, a spiral-bound book containing Christmas Carols "Koljadij" in four-part harmony in English and original languages from Russian, Ukraine, Carpatho-Russia, Czechoslovakia and Slovakia. Send $17 (includes postage) to John Sutko, 8020 So. Major Ave., Burbank, IL 60459-2025 or phone 708/424-3592.

WORKERS RECONSTRUCTING a church in Husi in northern Romania have discovered a body robed as an Orthodox priest. Although it looks as if it were newly-interred and it gives off a perfume scent of roses, it is believed to be priest Irimia Hagiu, who consecrated the original church in the early 1800's.

WORLD WAR II is still not settled between Japan and Russia because of a dispute over the Kuriles, an archipelago of 6,851 islands in the North Pacific. Many Russians live here, many of them born here. A small Russian Orthodox Church was recently built.

RECENTLY TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH is a book about the life of a contemporary saint. St. Luke, Archbishop of Simferopol, was a world-famous surgeon who suffered during the Soviet era for his belief in Christ. He was exiled many times, yet he was honored for his pioneering surgical work. His deep faith was revealed in his life and work... He had an icon of the Mother of God hanging in the operating room. Before an operation, he would make the sign of the cross, pray, and then make a cross with iodine on the patient's body... In the beginning of 1920, an examination committee ordered that the icon be removed from the operating room... (He) reacted vigorously. He left the hospital without fearing the consequences..." etc. The book may be ordered from Divine Ascent Press, PO Box 563, Pt. Reyes Station, CA 94956.

HELEN SPANOVICH, well-known choir director, was honored recently. She has directed Orthodox choirs for over 62 years, mostly in the Pittsburgh area. The choirs were from many ethnic groups, among them Serbian, Russian, Antiochian, Carpatho-Russian, etc. She will soon release Carpatho-Russian Plain Chant of the Divine Liturgy, which she has arranged in four-part harmony.

ORTHODOX MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENTS AND LEGISLATURES from around the world organized in 1993 to present a unified Orthodox voice on governmental matters. A meeting was held in June in Bucharest, Romania.

THE LEFT-BEHIND novels, co-authored by Tim LaHaye, are the best ever selling works of Christian fiction. The latest addition to the series The Remnant, On the Brink of Armagaddon is based on the Book of Revelation. The apocalyptic fever was heightened by September 11. The views expressed in the books differ greatly from Orthodox teachings.

OVER 1,000 WORSHIPPERS gathered at Holy Archangels Monastery, near Kosovo, on July 26 for the feast day of the monastery. During the Divine Liturgy, an explosion was heard on the hill hovering over the church. Upon investigation, 20 pounds of explosives were found that had been placed behind a big boulder that, upon detonation by a cell phone, the boulder would roll down the hill and kill and maim the worshippers.

MT. ATHOS is located in Greece. It is often referred to as the Holy Mountain or as the mountain where no women are allowed. Throughout its over thousand year history, the population has varied greatly. It had hit a low in the 1950s but it is now growing. In 1991, there were 1,536 monastics. Ten years later there were 2,278 and the number goes up. Many of the new arrivals are college educated.

FOUR RARE BIBLES are housed in a library in Princeton University in New Jersey. The most well-known is the Gutenburg Bible, printed in Mainz, Germany in 1455. It is one of only 49 surviving copies of the first books printed on moveable type. The other Bibles are the 1462 Bible, printed on vellum, and the 36-line Bible, given this title because it has 36 lines per page, which was printed in Bamberg, Germany in 1460 only 14 copies survive, also displayed in the Mentelin Bible, the first Bible printed in Strasbourg, France in 1460. Only 27 other copies survive.

WE OFTEN HEAR OF TEARS appearing on icons of the Mother of God. In March of 2001, blood appeared on the neck of her icon in the partially completed church of St. Nectarios on a mountain near Athens. Thousands have made pilgrimages to the church.

NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA is fortunate to have The Ekumen Chorale, which sings choral works usually heard in the Orthodox Church. They sing in Church Slavonic and English, directed by Patrick Marcinko II. For info call him at 570/876-2888.

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ST. NICHOLAS

of goodies, including a honey cookie (medovnik) and a "gold" chocolate coin reminding the children of the gold coin he threw into the window of the poor girls. Then all present sing "O Kto Kto, Nicholaia lubit/O who, who loves, Nicholas."

(Continued from front page)

DON'T ATTEND

a quiet service full of teaching about the Mother of God, Christ and God. It is full of Biblical readings, among them the Psalms read in their entirety or divided into stanzas and sung antiphonally, verses from Luke, Isaiah, Hebrews, etc. In fact, on Dec. 24 – the whole panorama of the Nativity is set before us. The services are instructional. It is not repeated on Dec. 25.

But most memorable is the repeating, hypnotic chant and declaration of "God is with us!" "Znami Boh"

Do you believe that God is with you? Does He exist in your life? Do you suddenly turn righteous and sensitive and generous and thoughtful, like a child waiting for Santa during this season or do you live as if He is in your life all year around?

(Continued from front page)

ST. NICHOLAS

the order of worship for the daily services according to the eight tones, the Irmologion, which gives the theme hymns of various Holy Days, the Menaia, a 12-volume set, one for each month containing the texts for the fixed commemorations of the days, much of the Easter Canon, or order of worship, and much, much more.

John of Damascus is remembered as "the composer of hymns, the star and a teacher of the universal Church and a defender of the doctrine..." He died peacefully at about 75 years of age.



HOLY NIGHT SUPPER

We find that customs differ for the Holy Night Supper. It depends upon the area of Europe that we claim, which our forefathers came from. Converts to the Orthodox faith or those whose parents went "American" and never celebrated this day must "adopt" a custom.

I am disturbed by some articles and booklets which I have read which discuss the form of this supper. Some of them offer customs which are absurd and I have never met anyone who is familiar with them.

First of all, the supper is held in a solemn, simple, quiet manner. Some people even call it "Viligia," which means vigil. The whole day is a fast day when no meat, eggs, or dairy products are eaten. The house is cleaned and aired and depending upon how many people will be present, thought is given to the traditional food for the supper. Hay or straw is purchased at a "feed" store or at a craft or florist shop. It was traditional for hay to be placed over the whole table, but now it is more practical to place it on the white tablecloth, in the center of the table, and to cover it with a white linen napkin. Then place a glass containing grain and a candle. This is the centerpiece. The straw or hay and white cloth are reminiscent of the surroundings where Christ was born. The wheat or rice or other grain and candle are used to bring to our attention that Christ is the light of the world and He has promised eternal life like the grain.

Everyone comes to the table in clean clothes and stands at their place while the Christmas tropar is said or sung. The father is usually the host.

It is imperative that everyone taste everything that is offered. The first dish put on the table in kutia made of wheat or rice. A syrup made of honey and poppy seeds is poured over each helping. In some families, it is traditional to offer a piece of blessed bread with honey or garlic with honey. The host mentions those who are not at the table for whatever reason and especially remembers those who have died. Then, one by one the dishes, usually twelve in number, are brought out. They include a lot of potato, bean, sauerkraut, and pea dishes. Some fish, especially dried cod, and herrings are popular. No shrimp or lobster! The humble food reminds us of the humble circumstances under which Jesus was born. Some families leave an empty plate setting for the stranger who may come. The kutia may be left on the table until the next day on the straw-laden table.

No one leaves the table until the supper is over and the host again sings the Christmas tropar and gives everyone the Christmas greeting: "Christ is Born!" with everyone responding "Glorify Him!" "Christos Razdajetsja!" with the response "Slavite Jeho!"

This is a bare outline of the custom which should be kept or started. It makes Christmas more spiritually meaningful, as it brings so much symbolism into the home.

BIBLE QUIZ

1. What kinsman of Christ was ordained to be His forerunner?
2. Who foretold Jesus' birth and ministry to Mary?
3. How was Joseph told about Jesus' miraculous conceptions?
4. Who was not one of the original twelve, though he probably labored harder for the gospel than anyone else?
5. What priest was made mute because he did not believe the prophecy given by an angel?
6. In the New Testament, a new covenant is instituted by Jesus. What does He use to symbolize this new covenant?
7. Who referred to Mary as the "mother of my Lord"?

ANSWERS:
1. John the Baptist (Luke 1:13-17)
2. The angel Gabriel (Luke 1:26-38
3. In a dream (Matthew 1:18-21)
4. St. Paul
5. Zacharias (Luke 1:20)
6. Wine, which symbolizes the blood of sacrifice (Mark 14:24)
7. Elizabeth (Luke 1:41-43)

GUBAS

Traditions are an important part of the celebration of the birth of Christ for Christians around the world. Unlike society's commercialization of Christmas, we, as Orthodox Christians, place great emphasis on the Nativity of Christ with our customs having their basis in our faith and the cultures of our ancestors.

Even though my family is now very small in number, I still try to follow the religious customs that I learned from my mother and grandmother. Recently, when a friend of mine, Mrs. Kachur, told me about a popular custom that has been passed down from generation-to-generation in St. Clair, Pennsylvania, I listened with great interest. She was speaking of the Gubas.

Also called Bethlehem Carolers, Jaslickari, and Bethlehemers, the Gubas represent an age-old custom among Slavic people. The customs and dress of the Gubas are as varied as the names given to the performers. The region, or even village, from which people originally immigrated, might have had some bearing on these differences. Regardless, though, of the name or specific customs associated with the groups, one thing is always a constant; that is, the joyous message delivered to the faithful that "Christ Is Born!"

As they portray the shepherds in the Gospel According to St. Luke, the Gubas go from house-to-house stating that they are humble shepherds who have come from Bethlehem. With them they bring a replica of the manger scene. There are usually four Gubas dressed in white garments with brightly colored ribbons across their chests. They wear tall stovepipe hats and carry staves and a star. One of them may portray an old woodsman who carries a wooden hatchet. Gubas may, also, wear sheep-skinned capes and various masks. Sometimes there are "angels" which accompany the Gubas and help in the singing of the Nativity hymns.

One by one, the shepherds kneel before the manger and tell the story of Christ's birth to all who are present. Then the Old Shepherd (*Staryj Pastyr*) concludes the visit with a greeting to: "My dear Orthodox Christians who have so kindly received us into your home. We wish you health, happiness, and prosperity. May God bless you for many years!" Before the Gubas have left the home, refreshments are offered and a donation is given to them for the church.

Whether it is just a few people or several generations of a family who have come together to celebrate the Nativity of Christ, it is no wonder that people wait for this yearly visit by the Gubas as they present this beautiful and time-honored custom.

Margaret Pysarchyk

HOW BROTHERS AND SISTERS

Recently a 20-inch long limestone box containing human bones was found near Jerusalem. It is believed to be the ossuary (coffin) of James the brother of Jesus as it is inscribed "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus." It is over 2000 years old and the oldest non-Biblical reference to Jesus.

In the New Testament, James is mentioned as the brother of Jesus. He was active in the early Christian community following Jesus' crucifixion. The first century historian, Josephus, mentions that James was stoned to death around 63 AD. He is also mentioned as the brother of Jesus "the Lord's brother" in Gal. 1:19. Josephus wrote that James was one of Jesus' four brothers and sisters. The teachings of what is meant by brothers and sisters differs in various Christian churches.

The earliest tradition dating from the 2nd century, which the Orthodox Church still holds, is that the brothers and sisters were Joseph's children by an earlier marriage. This was confirmed by the 3rd Ecumenical Council held in Ephesus in 431 AD. This Council affirmed that the Virgin Mary was to be called the Evervirgin and the Mother of God.

The Roman Catholic agrees with the position of Evervirgin and Mother of God but teaches that according to the Semitic dialect then in use, the brothers and sisters mentioned were cousins of Jesus who were born to Joseph's brother Clopas and his wife, Mary.

Most Protestant groups which don't necessarily believe that Mary was Evervirgin take the position that she gave birth to other children with Joseph.

The ossuary was sent to Toronto, Canada from Tel Aviv. When the packing box was opened, it was found that the ossuary was cracked and that one of the cracks runs through the last part of the inscription. If the ossuary is authentic, it will be one of the most important finds in New Testament archaeology.

MERCY

We hear the plea "Lord have mercy" time and again in the services of the Orthodox Church. Why so many times? What is the mercy we ask for?

Mercy as an attribute of God is not to be confused with mere goodness. Mercy is directly opposed to justice, while justice is one of the natural and legitimate developments of goodness. Goodness may demand the exercise of justice – indeed it often does – but to say that mercy demands the exercise of justice is to use the word without meaning. Mercy asks that justice be set aside.

Mercy is a disposition to pardon the guilty. Its exercise consists in arresting and setting aside the penalty of law, when that penalty has been incurred by transgression. It is directly opposed to justice. Justice treats every individual according to his offense; mercy treats the offender differently from how he deserves to be treated. "Lord have mercy!"

The moment that we trust in mercy, we give up at once and entirely all apologies and excuses; for these imply a reliance upon God's justice. An excuse or an apology is nothing more nor less than an appeal to justice, a plea designed to justify our conduct. Trusting in mercy forever implies that we have ceased from all excuses forever. "Lord, have mercy."

Many people actually trust in justice and not in mercy. They say: "God is just – God will not do me no injustice." True, God will do us no injustice. We need never fear that. But how terrible if God should do us strict justice! How fearful if we receive no mercy! If God does not show us infinite mercy, we are forever lost, as surely as we are all sinners! "Lord, HAVE mercy!"

THE VIGIL SERVICE AT CHRISTMAS

One of the most beautiful services in the Orthodox Church is the vigil service of the Nativity of Christ, held in the evening. The service takes a little over an hour and has several of the most beautiful hymn melodies of the Church.

- The opening prayers
- Psalm 13
- Psalm 91
- Responsive Hymn: "God is with us!"
- Creed
- The Nativity Troparion (Main Hymn of Christmas)
- Prayer of Manasses, King of Judah
- The Nativity Kontakion (Secondary Hymn of Christmas)
- The Litiya Verse (in the middle of the church)
- The Litya Litany
- Apostikia Verses (Hymns)
- St. Simeon's Prayer
- Blessing of Wheat, Wine and Oil
- Matins
- Psalm 3
- Psalm 38
- Psalm 63
- God is the Lord!
- Praise ye the name of the Lord
- Glorification of the Feastday Ikon
- Hymn: From my Youth
- Prokeimenon
- Reading from the Holy gospel
- Christmas Canon
- Let every breath praise the Lord
- The Great Doxology
- Troparion

EARLY ICON

Both prophets, Isaiah and Jeremiah, prophesied that the Lord would come to Egypt and that His presence would shake the temples and destroy the idols.

Isaiah (19:1) wrote: "Behold, the Lord shall come to Egypt, and the idols of Egypt shall be moved to His presence."

In Jeremiah we read that when the divine refugees came to the city of Hermopolis (Cairo), and came near an idolatrous temple, all the idols in the temple suddenly fell down and were broken to pieces.

St. Palladius, who lived around the year 430 (and was sent to Ireland as its first Christian bishop), commented on this: "We saw the idolatrous temple there, in which, at the presence of the Saviour, all the idols fell to the ground."

In one temple there were three hundred and sixty-five idols and when the most Holy Virgin went into the temple with the Divine Child in her arms, all these idols fell down and were smashed. Idols all over the land of Egypt fell in the same way.

We read that when the holy prophet Jeremiah lived in Egypt he was aged. He foretold to the Egyptian pagan priests that the idols would fall and all the graven images would be destroyed when a Virgin Mother with a Child born in a manger would come to Egypt. The priests remembered this prophecy and depicted in their temples a virgin resting on a bed with a child in a manger beside her, wrapped in swaddling clothes. They venerated this picture. Pharaoh Ptolemy noticed the pictures and asked the priests what was depicted. They replied that it was a mystery foretold by a prophet to their forefathers, and that they were awaiting its fulfillment. We know that this mystery pictured on the icon was fulfilled not only in Egypt but in the whole world.

WALKING WITH THE LORD

Doctors recommend that a daily routine of exercise keeps your body fit, healthy, and boosts your immune system. It increases blood flow to your muscles, speeds healing, enhances good mood, controls your weight, boosts cardiovascular functions, increases oxygenation to muscle tissues, and improves stamina. *Walking* could possibly be the best form of exercise.

The same can be said about the health of the soul. Daily spiritual exercises in the form of prayer, fasting, reading, meditation and acts of kindness and mercy can transform your soul into a place of light, and be better equipped and ready for the interior warfare in which we are constantly engaged. Saint Paul reminds us that we are not "contending against flesh and blood but against the spiritual hosts of wickedness." *(Galatians 6: 12)*

The Russian archpriest, martyr and prolific preacher Alexander Men (+1990) said, "the essence of our lives as Christians is to walk with the Lord." This walk is a "personal relationship" that only God can have with each individual soul.

The Bible describes Noah as one who "walked with God" as a "righteous man, blameless in his generation." This same phrase, "walked with God" is used regarding the relationship that Enoch had with the Lord. *(Genesis 5: 24)* God gave a commandment to Abram to "walk before Me, and be blameless." *(Genesis 17:1)* He later promised His people, "If you walk in My statutes and observe My commandments and do them, I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be My people." *(Leviticus 26: 3, 12)* The Lord spoke to Moses "face to face, as a man speaks to his friend." *(Exodus 33: 11).*

If you choose to walk with Christ, certain provisions will be needed for the journey: the food of His most-pure Body and precious Blood; tears of repentance to water the seeds of grace; the Scripture as a roadmap; the Cross as a weapon to vanquish the evil one; the saints as beacons; prayer to communicate with the Lord.

Walking with the Lord is a most rewarding experience. Christ came to give us life *(John 10:10)*; it is up to you to receive it more and more abundantly.

Raymond J. Mastroberte
Iconographer

A TEST OF FRIENDSHIP

If a friend of mine gave a feast, and did not invite me to go to it, I should not mind a bit. But if a friend of mine had a sorrow and refused to allow me to share it, I should feel it most bitterly. If he closed the doors of the house of mourning against me, I would move back again and again, and beg to be admitted, so that I might share in what I was entitled to share. If he thought me unworthy, unfit to weep with him, I would feel it as the most poignant humiliation, as the most terrible mode for which disgrace could be inflicted on me ... he who can look on the loveliness of the world and share its sorrow, and realize something of the wonder of both, is in immediate contact with divine things, and has got as near to God's secret as anyone can get.

ETHNIC CHUCKLE

Dorohaya Tyotya Maria,

Yah taka ashamed about what happened na Church Supper tot druhe thezhdan, zhe yah don't know what to doing.

Tak bullo. Yah peshla doh Sisterhood meeting ee ohnee dolly me job robitee borsch na Church Supper ee ohne dolly me helper nasha know-it-all krayanka. Presh ol day to make borsch. Yah just drinking me first cup of coffee kolee tota krayanka ringuyeh me door bell. Chas nachenatee. All morning long me chop-puyem totee vegetables ee mayem argument yak treyba making tot borsch. You know her zhe ohna duma zhe only ohna mozhe robitee dobree borsch. Me arguing, how big to chop vegetables. Ohna leavuyeh vegetables too big, yah like them bite size. Ohna neh make zaprashku, a yah like zaprashka boh borsch tastuyeh richer. Ohna kazhe zhe you add salt at the end of cooking time, a ya dumam zhe you got to add some yak cooking going on. Me arguing about shitko ee agree nah nitch.

Yah uzhe mala enough argument ee dumam better stop. Yah invite krayankyu to watch soap opera na TV. Even too malee argument which one to watch. Anyhow yah yeh invite to family room, ee turn on TV, ee put out wine, cheese ee cookies yah ohne do na TV shows. We did agree after half hour ee couple glasses of wine to take turns to mix borsch. Yak bull me turn yah putting in little bit of salt.

When nashe TV stories over me oba went to kitchen. Borsch was finished. Before I knew what ohna doing, she grabbed the salt ee poured it into the borsch ee kaskey: "I don't think we'll taste the borsch, it might spoil the good flavor of the wine, cheese and cookies we had this afternoon." EE ohna took the pots ee put them in her car to take to the Church Supper.

Oyh, Tyotya Maria, I don't know how to tell you, zhe tot borsch mal so much salt zhe me mohlee using it to melt the ice on the sidewalk.

Budte Zdrove
Ole Salty
Hanya.

NOT THE GREATEST

In the Orthodox Church, the Resurrection of Christ/Easter is considered a greater Holy Day than Christmas/The Nativity. However, as we live in an environment where we the Orthodox are a minority, we have caught up in the way the West celebrates Christmas. We have adopted the Christmas wreath, the creche, the Christmas tree, decorating with lights and greens and other symbols of Christmas. Adding these to our family traditions to better make us aware of Christmas as the Nativity of Christ is fine but does adding them make it more stressful to us.

In The Living God we read: "Christmas festivities presently take on such secular dimensions that we risk forgetting the true meaning of this feast: the overwhelming commercialism; the glaring decorations in the stores, homes and even streets; the tale of Santa Claus pushed to the absurd; a debauchery of food and gifts. Truly paganism is not dead, not even the adoration of idols! The golden calf takes the place of God man. ...In the home we leave only a minimal place for Jesus, in the form of a little doll placed in the middle of charming figurines. Then we put tremendous emphasis on the family celebration. Thereby we run the great risk of perverting the mystery of God become a human child, of forgetting the King of Israel, of allowing the spoiled child of the family to become the king of the celebration!"

FUNDS

ALASKA: Ethel Wattlock
MISSION: Marian Barber, Mary Nakulak, Mary Allen, Olga Shust McHugh
BOTH ALASKA AND MISSION: Julia Guzey
POSTAGE: Melanie Horbal Shuster, Vera Cibulsky, Anonymous, Sergey Sheratine, Lillian Marousek, Anna Connolly, Marian Barber, Helen Boulavsky, Mary Kochmaruk, John Barna, Julia Guzy, Gerasim Mayden, Mary Krapf, Ann Chach, Nicholas Halesky, Mary Allen, Mr. and Mrs. Albert Previte
Many thanks to all of you who have donated to the special funds.

* * * * * *

St. Catherine's name was Dorothea before she was baptized.

Undique (from everywhere)

When NASA first started sending up astronauts, it quickly discovered that ballpoint pens do not work in zero gravity. To combat the problem, NASA scientists spent a decade and $12 billion developing a pen that writes in zero gravity, upside down, under water, on almost any surface, and at temperatures ranging from below freezing to more than 300°C. The Russians used a pencil.

Those on the Internet who are interested in Lemko music can check: http://lemko.org/lvpro/index.html or http://lemko.org/lvpro/komancza.html or http://lemko.org/lvpro/dozna.html

We can't choose how we feel, but we can choose what to do about it.

Those Sborniks so many of our elders cherished and used in a book which contains many prayers, troparia and portions of the various services gathered for the use of laypeople. When we were in NovoDavidkovo, the people had their Sborniks in church opened to the particular Sunday and sang many of the movable parts of both the Matins and Divine Liturgy. They then took them home to use during the week for private devotions.

Can you imagine letting a week go by without discussing money, food or sports? Yet, how about your faith?

Applause has no place in the Orthodox Church.

Surprising how few children know even the common Christmas carols. Since they no longer sing them in school, teachers preparing a Yolka or Christmas program with children in the parish have a problem.

Protestantism placed man in his abject inwardness alone before God, Judaism posited the community - klad yisrael, as God's covenant partner. The Jew met God as a member of a nation, a chosen people, seeking holiness in a collective, comprehensive intensively ritualized way of life.

In Bethlehem where Jesus was born, it was customary to build an extension onto the mouth of a cave for living quarters. This was used for ordinary living purposes, while the cave itself served as a storage area and as a shelter for the animals.



Editor's Notes

You will find the photo of Fr. Basil and myself at the head of these notes. It has been returned by the request of many of our readers.

I know that Christmas carols are not "Orthodox" but I rue their loss. If you ask children to sing Christmas carols they have no idea what you are requesting, as they are not taught them in public school, as this has been forbidden for many years. They are unfamiliar except for "I Caught Mommy Kissing Santa Claus" and "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer." and then there is the new "Happy Birthday, Jesus."

I want to thank the many correspondents who sent me articles from their local papers and to the priests and non-ordained seminary graduates who have offered their help. I have called on some of them to check for information which I could not find in either my Russian or English reference books.

Have you noticed how many people greet you with "Happy Holidays!" instead of "Merry Christmas?" This newer greeting is a nod to political correctness – it leaves you to decide which unspecified holiday you are celebrating. This season is now more than Christmas and the Nativity of Christ, it encompasses other celebrations not even remotely connected with His Birth as Hanukkah, which, in reality, is a very minor Jewish day, Kwanzaa, which celebrates African heritage and the Winter Soltice or Winter Break, the new name for the vacation students have in December. The exclusivity of Christmas is eroding. Orthodox with the greeting "Christ is born!" better explains the "reason for the season."

Lastly, I want to thank all of you for your comfort during this difficult time of loss. Your heartfelt notes, cards, love, and calls are just what I need. I am sure I can see God's Hand in the spacing of the calls I am receiving. I get a few each day – and they are so much appreciated.

I was humbled by how many of you have told me that you have added Fr. Basil's name to your family diptych grammota. The reason so many of you gave is that he helped you through a very difficult spiritual time and you consider him your spiritual father and have added him to the memorial list of your (blood) family. May God accept the prayers for him!

I will be sending out the statements for the Packet Plan this month. We bill for one year in advance. Please take prompt attention so that we can keep our list current and updated.

God is with us!

Matushka Nina Stroyen

PRESS FUND

Thank you so much for expressing your appreciation for "the Herald" and the desire to see it continue. Mr. and Mrs. Albert Previte, Catherine Eva Komanecky, Marian Barber, Mary Allen, Orthodox Society of America, Gerasim Mayden, Julia Guzy, Nellie Balach, William and Florence Pocho, Anne Dorozynski, Fr. Michael Sopoliga, Fr. Michael Hutnyan, Mary Arndt, Irene Allen, Tom Swift, Dr. Dimitrios Pappas, Ethel Watlock, Anonymous, Sophia Coggins, Josep Lesnick.

Olga Weiss in memory of her husband who was a WWII Navy veteran. Barbara Powell in memory of Donald Powell. Eugenia Longcrier in memory of a long-time Orthodox Herald subscriber Eugene Slutyak. Mary Ardan in memory of Peter Ardan.

Vera Croitoru in memory of her husband Peter and Father Basil Tim and Mary Goomas in memory of Trevor, Andrew and Joelle and Father Basil. Dorothy Kompchak in memory of her husband John and Fr Basil, who were stationed together at ChanutAFB, IL. Elizabeth Patnychuk, Anita Anderson, Cyril Wadzita, Mary Derkasch and Pat and Marion Stenko, Vechnaya Pamyat! in memory of Fr. Basil.



Nut rolls are a must in many homes at Christmastime. If you like them but have never made them, here is a recipe that you should have great success with, even if you don't have any experience. You don't even need to have a rolling pin – use a Coke bottle. If you don't have a pastry board or cloth – use a large plastic shopping bag. This recipe is for the traditional nut roll, which needs no chilling and is not dry or soggy.

EASY NUT ROLL

DOUGH:
1 pkg. hot roll mix
1 egg
3 Tbls. sugar

Mix as directed on the box, adding the above ingredients. Let rise to double once. Meanwhile, make filling.

FILLING:
2 cups walnuts
1 1/2 cups sugar
1 tsp. cinnamon
enough milk to moisten

Grind walnuts, add other ingredients. Set aside.

METHOD:
When dough has doubled, punch down. Knead a few times. Divide into two equal parts. Roll on floured surface into oblong. Spread each piece with 1/2 of filling. Roll up from long side as for a jelly roll. Do not roll to tightly. Allow for rising. Place in greased loaf pan. Cover with a dish towel. Let rise until double. Bake at 375° for about 25 minutes.

For browner surface, beat egg, add tablespoon water. Spread over unbaked roll.

* * * * * *

Good behavior is contagious and, unfortunately, so is bad.

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WINTER'S GRACE

"Happiness is not the absence of trouble but the ability to cope with it." Too many people spend their time wishing that there would never be any trouble in their lives. Their time and energy would be better spent accepting the fact that life has its ups and downs and learn to enjoy the good times and how to deal with the hard times.

One way to do that is to count their other blessings; look on the bright side, bring to mind all the other things in their life that are probably better than they could have ever hoped for. Most of all, it does even out.

Disappointment is also a part of life. What you do after you are disappointed determines whether you will look at most things the rest of your life optimistically or whether you fall into gloom and depression. Clearly, it is better to expect good things to happen rather than suffer disappointment twice – once in anticipation and once in reality. The law of averages says that good will alternate with bad, and as the Good Book says: "For everything there is a season…

LIGHTER MOMENT

Coming out of church, Mrs. Linchak asks her husband: "Do you think that Anna Critsky is dying her hair?"

"I didn't even see her," Mr. Linchak admits.

"And that dress her daughter was wearing," Mrs. Linchak continues. "Really, don't tell me you don't think that's the proper way to dress for a mother of two to go to church."

"I'm afraid I didn't notice that either," Mr. Linchak says.

"Oh, for heaven's sake," snaps his wife. "A lot of good it does you to go to church."

Home Bible Reading Schedule

DECEMBER 2002

1	**Luke 18:18-27**	19	Mark 10:17-23
2	Luke 20:27-44	20	Mark 10:24-32
3	Luke 21:12-19	21	Luke 16:10-15
4	Luke 21:5-11,20-24	**22**	**Luke 18:35-end**
		23	Mark 10:46-52
5	Luke 21:28-33	24	Mark 11:11-23
6	Luke 21:37-22:8	25	Mark 11:23-26
7	Luke 13:19-29	26	Mark 11:27-33
8	**Luke 17:12-19**	27	Mark 12:1-12
9	Luke 8:1[illegible]21	28	Luke 17:3-10
10	Mark 8:22-26	**29**	**Luke 19:1-10**
11	Mark 8:30-34	30	Mark 12:13-17
12	Mark 9:10-16	31	Mark 12:18-27
13	Mark 9:33-41		
14	Luke 14:1-11		
15	**Luke 18:18-27**		
16	Mark 9:42-10:1		
17	Mark 10:2-12		
18	Mark 10:11-16		

Please note: There are several Bible Readings for each day. We have chosen these for home reading.

NO TIME TO PRAY

Those who think that to practice mental prayer we must sit secretly somewhere and contemplate God in this manner, do not understand mental prayer. The only hidden place we need is in our heart. All we need is to stand and contemplate God as if He were with us. People do say that for the cultivation of mental prayer solitude is very useful, but it is impossible for most people. They live in non-stopping busymess and with many conflicts. Therefore, they have no time for mental prayer.

It is true that solitude is necessary for mental prayer. However, there are two types of solitude. The first is complete and permanent as when people retire to a desert to live alone, and the other is partial and temporary. The first in all practicality is unlikely for most people, but the second is possible. Everybody has some moments in the day when he is alone, even if he cannot plan for several hours to be alone. During these brief moments, he can develop the habit of mental prayer. There is no excuse not to. Find a few moments, give up all worries, empty your mind, stand mentally before God in your heart and open up your soul to Him.

St. Theophan the Recluse

TRADITION OF ICONS

The painting and veneration of icons is an ancient tradition of Christianity. The images of Christ and the saints are considered treasures of the faith.

Icons are sacred images. They are meant to communicate theological truths, to provide in pictures what the Scriptures provide in words. They seek to provide a window into the divine, a glimpse into heaven for the faithful while they are yet on earth.

The painting (writing) of an icon follows a strict set of rules and involves both the artistic skill and the spiritual preparation of the iconographer. There are several different schools or different styles of icons. However, the art produced is highly symbolic and full of meaning. The icon becomes a vehicle for profound meditation and prayer for anyone who looks upon it through the eyes of faith. Most Orthodox have favorite icons to aid them in their prayer and devotion time.